THE CONFLICT IN CONSCIENCE OF A deare CHRISTIAN, named BESSIE CLARKSONE in the Parish of Lanerk, *Which shee lay vnder* three yeare & an half.

With the conference that past betwixt her Pastor and her at diuerse times.

Newly corrected and amended.

EDINBVRGH
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To the Christian Reader.

THis conference (Christian Reader) came foorth at the first by my knowledge. I found the words of this deare defunct of greater worth than that they should fall to the ground, and not to bee gathered: so at last, as I visit I wrote, but not to put out to the view of the World: yet some hath done it by an uncorrect coppie, wherein my words are made hers at sometimes, and hers mine. Wherefore at the desire of the Printer and other good people I haue given a just coppie, intreating heartily the Almightie, that you who reads it may make profitable vse of it to his glorie, and thy owne everlasting good.

Thine in the LORD
W. L.

The conflict in conscience of a deare Christian, named *Bessie Clerksone in the Parish of LANERK, which shee lay* vnder three yeare and *an halfe.*

Minister.

BESSIE *how are you?*

Bessie.

I finde the wrath of an angrie GOD, of a crabbed GOD; and all the wrath that you preached, which come on mee now: I finde him dayly comming against mee.

Min. *Bessie, GOD will for good ends let his owne deare children taste of his anger, and wrestle with his wrath in this world, that they be not casten vp in a dead sleepe of fleshly securitie; and so perish with the wicked of the world, in that great wrath that is to bee revealed; and to bring them to an hatred of sinne and sorrow for it: and to teach them how farre they are*

obliged to the Sonne of GOD, who hath for them vndergone the full weight of that wrath, (for your trouble is but a sparke of that fire wherein Christ was burnt vp in a sacrifice to the Father) and that your hearts being racked with terrour, we may bee made for the greater peace, and the calme after the tempest may bee the sweeter when it comes, and Gods glorie the greater, and more manifest in that dealing, in casting downe, and plunging in the hell, and heaving againe to the heavens, & this sort of dealing drives atheisme best out of the heart.

Bes. I am not a devill to contemne God, and I cannot get faith to believe in God.

Min. *It is a degree of faith to finde the want of faith, it is a step to a greater grouth.*

When I was about to comfort her, shee said, Will yee speake to mee as yee should, and say, thou wretched, sinfull, and wicked woman, and not tell mee sweete words.

I answered her, No Bessie, I must not measure you as yee doe your selfe by your owne sense, but to teach you to hope a-

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boue hope; and say with Iob, *Lord, if thou will slay mee I will trust in thee?*

Bes. O there was grace there, but there is a great dissension betwixt God and mee; I am cast away; O that this wakning had come twenty yeares since! but now my time is lost; many come to Word and Sacrament that knowes not what they are doing; the morne when Gods people come to heare you I cannot come, I am cast aside.

Min. *It is yet the acceptable time wherein the Lord may bee found, hee is yet on the throne of grace; giue no place to such suggestions of Sathan, and distrustfull cogitations, arysing of your corruption; and where yee cannot come to the Word, that is not to be laid to your charge: It is not an argument of Gods anger, when one by sicknesse, or trouble is with-holden who would faine bee there: but seeke you by prayer to God, who by his Spirit will teach you inwardly, and supply the Want of the meanes by an inWard working.*

When I preased to perswade her, that God in his owne time would ease her, and speake peace to her, I cannot

finde that, said she. Min. Albeit ye feele it not, pray that the Lord would *remember mercy in wrath*, as the Prophet Hab. 3.2. Mercy in wrath, said shee, O that is a strange word! O for absolution! O for a drop to coole my tormented soule! O that I could win a step nearer him.

Min. Blessed are they that hunger & thirst, for they shall bee satisfied. *It is the Lord who is our sufficiencie, who workes the will and the deed: it is hee who wakens those desires in you, and hee will worke the worke.*

When I said the Lord delt with her as hee doth, to humble her: To humble mee, said shee, and that I am, that Catte that sits there is in better case nor I am: I shall beate downe this carcase with beire-bread and water, but that doth not the turne. When her servant woman said you were a good body, and beginne to commend her.

Cease, said shee, I am but a dog, and worse nor a dog; Gods wrath is on me, for my invisible sinnes, and if I were away, there would be none but Christians on the earth: I know Christ would goe be-

betwixt mee and all my ſinnes, but one, I will not laine it, nor hyde it, it is deſpaire.

Min. *You are very ſenſible of your vnbeliefe, and God will make you alſo ſenſible of a liuely faith or all bee done: for a litle while hath hee forſaken you, as hee ſaith,* Iſa. 54. 7. 8. 9. 10. *but with great compaſſion will hee gather you: for a moment in his anger, hath hee hid his face from you for a little ſeaſon, but with everlaſting mercy will hee haue compaſſion on you,* Ibid. 10. 11. *O thou afflicted and toſſed with tempeſt! &c.*

Beſ. Is it God that doth this to mee. Can God ſpoyle himſelfe? I had faith and prayer, now they are reſt, couped and ſpoyled: can God doe it? will God rob himſelfe? will hee take away the matter of his owne glorie? I am aſhamed to looke any man in the face: I haue loſt the favour of God & man. O for a drop of grace! O for *as much faith as a graine of muſtard ſeede!*

Min. *Beſſie it is the Lord who deales with you, but not to rob your faith which is his gift, and once given commeth never*

vnder reuocation: Yet it continueth not ay in alyke vigour and ſtrength, but will oft come vnder a great eclypſe, and bee brangled with doubtings, and ſhaking with feares, for there is no perfection heere, and all this exerciſe is to adde ſtrength, that yee wreſtling with God as Iaakob *did, may prevaile in end; and that it is not loſt your earneſt deſire evidently declareth.* And when I ſhew her that wee walked by faith and not by feeling, and muſt not meaſure our ſelues, nor Gods goodneſſe and loue by our ſenſe. Shee anſwereth, if faith doe it not, I haue done with it.

When one beſide ſpake to her of Gods favour and preſence. Shee ſaid, God if I were as ſure of it as you are, I haue ſeete, (ſaid ſhee) hands, eyes, knees, I can doe any thing but one, I cannot belieue, well were the ſoule that ever it was ordained that had faith: O the great want of faith and loue to God in theſe dayes. It was never leſſe, and they will finde one day what it is to want it: one thing holds mee from God, it is vnbeliefe, GODS hand is ſore on mee: I would faine belieue: Pray, pray, pray, (ſaid ſhee) yee that haue faith.

Min.

Min. The LORD *who* will not breake the bruiſed reede, nor quench the ſmoaking flaxe, *will bring your deſire, and thoſe weake beginnings to a greater grouth and perfection: for faith groweth by degrees, as that blind mans ſight* Mark. 8. 24, 25.

When I told her of GODS dealing with his owne by diverſe ſorts of trouble in minde, body, and eſtate. Shee anſwereth, No trouble to the trouble in mind. I care not, ſaid ſhee, for legges, armes, eyes, and all the reſt, if I could get comfort in the blood of Ieſus: I would not care my carcaſe lay lame, leper, ſick, ſore, ſo that my minde were pacified, and at one with God: I care not for all Sathans aſſaults if hee were even ſtanding there ſo that I could finde God with mee, and not againſt mee.

Waite on, ſaid I, the Lord will come, Shee anſwereth, Hee commeth daylie in wrath. But hee will come in mercie, ſaid I, in his owne time, She anſwereth, Ever ſince this bred in me you ſaid that, but I can never find it, would I willingly loſſe my ſoule, if I could get faith? well is the ſoule that ever it was ordained of

God,

God, that gets the comforts of the holy Ghost.

Min *Would you not Bessie bee one of his*, Wallie, wallie, said she, to be one of his, to haue one drop of grace from his finger end, who would not bee one of his?

Then, said I, blessed are yee, for *blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousnesse, for they shall bee satisfied.* Blessed are they that seeke in sincerities, to bee one of that societie of the Saincts of God, to haue the comforts of that communion and priviledge of his people, for *blessed*, Psal. 33. 12. *are these people whose God is the LORD, even the people whom hee hath chosen for his owne anheritance*. And after I had prayed for her, and preassed by some passages of Scripture to comfort her. Shee said, It is heavy to my hart to heare those sweet admonitions and prayers, and to get no part of them in my soule, and not to find him whom you seeke.

She sayeth againe, Whether shall I turne? Whether shall I goe? What shal I doe? Whether shall I runne to seeke God to grip him? I cannot get grippes

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faſtned on him. Deare Miniſter, ſaid ſhe, tell mee what ſinne hath procured this? that I am ſuch a ſpectacle to the world by all others? Heard you, reade you, knew you ever one like mee? Then I ſhew her of *Iob*, *Ieremie*, *David*, *Hezekiah*, and others. And albeit *Beſſie* to your feeling yee cannot get grips faſtned on him, yet aſſuredly hee hath grippes faſtned on you; the good ſheepe-heard hath you in his hand & none ſhall plucke you out of it.

Beſ. I thinke if ever I had had faith I could not haue loſt it. I anſwered, You haue not loſt it; you deſire, which GOD reputs for faith, and hath the ſame promiſe of ſatisfaction which faith hath made vnto it. She anſwereth, I would bee burnt quicke to be ſure of ſalvation: I liue without faith, I liue and worſhip not God, I can finde no comfort from God nor man; my life is miſerable and comfortleſſe.

Min. *That is even* Iobs *complaint, ſaid I,* Iob 3. 20. 21. *So albeit yee bee comfortleſſe to your ſenſe; yet yee are not marrowleſſe, and hath the Saints ſubject to*

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the ſame tentation and tribulation with you: and yee ſhall get in the Lords mercie a bleſſed outgate with them: yea, although wee bee never Witneſſe to it, yet yee your ſelfe ſhall feele it.

Beſ. I am the moſt miſerable and wretched creature in the world, for my ſinnes are hid to my ſelfe, and knowne to God.

Min. *Beſſie, God is not ay perſuing ſinne When the ſoules of his Saints are perplexed and perſued With horrours:* Hee ſeeth no iniquitie in Iaakob, nor ſinne in Iſrael: *albeit it ſetteth vs to ſeeke them out: and to ſorrow for them: hee hath other ends wherefore he dealeth ſo with his owne: namely, that hee may ſhew his worke and glorifie his Name, as Chriſt ſayeth of that blind man. Iohn 9. 3.*

After I had prayed, ſhe ſaid, if your prayers haue a good grouud and bee according to Gods will, its the better, it will bee the better heard. But that it is ſaid I, I haue a warrand to mourne with them that mourne: and to pittie and pray for all that are in trouble, chiefly of my owne flocke: Your warrand were

the better, ſaid ſhee, if I were one of Chriſts flocke: happie were that ſoule that were one ofthoſe. But yeeare one of theſe, ſaid I. Yee haue aye ſaid that ſaid ſhee, but I can never finde it. You will finde it, ſaid I, in the Lords time: tarrie his leaſure, hee will come with comfort. Tarrie muſt I, ſaid ſhe, where ſhall I flee or flit? hee commeth aye in due time, but hee commeth to mee in wrath. When I remembred her againe of *Iob*, who ſaid, *if thou Wilt ſlay mee, I will belieue in thee*. She anſwereth, where will yee get the like of *Iob*; no, not amongſt you all that are Miniſters: faithfull was hee, but I haue none; no ſalvation for mee. Then to trye her, I ſaid, will yee ſell mee your part of it, your title, right and kyndneſſe; what ſhall I giue you for it; if you haue none you may the better cheape quite it, and I will giue you for it. Shee anſwereth, Why ſcorne yee mee, a ſilly poore woman, & yee a wiſe man; I would buy and not ſell, if I had ten thouſand millions of gold, if I had a thouſand worlds, if it were to be bought for money, I wold

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giue you all for it.

Min. *I said not this to scorne you Bessie, but to draw out your desire by this demand as it doth: whereby it is easie to discerne that ye haue a sure title to that salvation, albeit it seeme tint to your sence.*

Bes. I haue no pleasure in any thing, neither in husband nor childe: I can doe nothing but sinne; my life is all sinne, and it were to peale the barke of a kaile castock and eate, I sinne in the doing of it: why liue *I* then? *I* can not die, said shee, *I* cannot liue, they will burie a carcase, will they burie mee, a carcase of sinne: yea sinne it selfe.

When *I* speared at her, if shee desired mercy. Shee answered. O that his desire to me, were as great as mine to him! O for a looke of loue! Cry and pray, said *I*, for the Lord hath said, *Seeke and yee shall finde: knocke and it shall be opned vnto you.* My prayer, said shee, is repelled: my cry is not respected: it doth no good: *I* cannot haue faith, except God giue it; none hath any grace but from him; happie are they that can blesse him and call on his name.

Min.

Min. *And happie are they Bessie that counts them happie, and would with all their heart be of that number as ye would.*

Bes. That stone in the wall hath as great appetite to any bodily comfort of meate, drinke, cloaths, or such lyke as *I* haue, for *I* cannot get the comforts of the holy Spirit.

When *I* prayed for that consolation to her, that solide comfort which is stronger nor tentation, tribulation, or death it selfe. Shee said, Why ware yee your prayers on such a vyle wretch? God hath counted the number, and gathered them, and *I* am one moe. *I* will not believe you, said *I*, Bessie, albeit you believe the suggestions of *Sathan* in your false heart: it is otherwise in the accoumpt of God, and *I* will pray for you that it may bee revealed to you, and pray yee with mee. And after *I* had prayed, shee said, Sayings will not doe it, you doe your part, but if God worke not, and he giue not, *I* cannot haue comfort. Can any haue grace till God giue it? Can that stone believe? Yet Bessie, said *I*, let vs vse the meanes and doe according

cording to Gods direction in his word, and waite on till he who hath wounded heale againe, and hee will make light arise in the midst of your darkenesse, the light of consolation in the darkenesse of perturbation, and calme the tempest that is in your conscience.

Bes. There is no friend to that soule that is vnder Gods feede: *I* am vnder Gods feede: and my husband, children, nor no other are friends to mee, nay not my selfe is a friend to my selfe: as for my corps, *I* care not it were casten vp to the heaven, and kepped on yron graps, so my soule had peace.

Min. *Bessie, many hath peace with themselues that hath none with GOD, as secure sinners sleeping in sinne, and crying peace: and some hath peace With God that hath none with themselues; and as many haue not the grace and faith, Which they thinke they haue, so some haue the grace and faith which they thinke they haue not*

Bes. I care not my owne damnation, if GOD bee glorified: what recke of mee if hee get his owne glorie?

Min. *Bessie, assure your selfe these are*

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not the Wishes and words of a castaway: and Gods glorie bee deare to you, you and your salvation are deare to him.

When *I* speared if shee tooke meate to refresh her bodie, Shee answered, No, all craues that, both faithfull and vnfaithfull, albeit the vnfaithfull be vnworthie of it, for they cannot glorifie that God who giues it.

When *I* desired her to pray. Shee answered, *I* haue no warrand, and hath many letts. Will you say, said *I*, God be mercyfull to me for Iesus sake. Shee said, God bee merciſull to mee for thy owne sake, for Christ hath not redeemed all. Bessie, said *I*, yee must seeke in the Name of *IESVS*, whom the father hath sealed, in whom alone hee is reconciled with vs, and for whose sake hee giveth grace and mercie: lay your countpt you will never come to the Father but by him.

Min. *Bessie. doe yee not pray when yee are alone.* Shee answered, *I* will not commend my selfe. When one pairting with her, said, God bee with you Bessie. Shee answered, God forbid hee were

were with you as hee is with mee. O there is a great change comming, a feare full alteration, a cuppe of wrath comming, wee are conceived and borne in sinne, and what shall bee the end of sin.

Min. *Indeed Bessie sinne hath feare-full effects, but blessed bee that Sonne of God Iesus, Who saveth his people frm their sinne*: there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.

Bes. I know if the devill were chained there beside mee, hee cannot without Gods permission hurt an haire of mine head: but GOD beeing angry with mee, hee turnes him louse and all his instruments against me.

Min. *Bessie, the Lord loosed him upon Iob: but so many linkes onely, that hee wan to his goods, children, body, but not to his life, farre lesse to his soule*: the Lord will not giue the soule of his Turtle to the beast: the good Sheepe-heard hath you in his hand, and none shall plucke you out of it: *What ever be your feares, doubtings, or apprehensions under your tryall, and present desertion*

When some stan ding by spake to her,

shee

ſhee ſayes, Take all that to your ſelfe that yee ſay to me, yee haue no borrows, no aſſurance more nor *I*, and knowes not but yee may come in the lyke cace.

Min. *Indeed wee ſhould take our Warning by you, and wee haue all miſter to gather and lay vp againſt the houre of tentation. I comming to her ſayes, Beſſie, Haue yee gotten any cemfort yet.* Shee anſwered, When God ſends it, *I* will get it.

But ſeeke yee it not, ſaid I. She anſwereth, What availeth words when there is nothing within. When *I* was bleſſing the Lord, ſhee doubled the word, and ſaid, Bleſſed bee hee, Bleſſed be he: O that *I* could glorifie him! O that *I* could get gripes faſtned on him. I ſee Beſſie, ſaid I, albeit you pray not, yet you praiſe and bleſſe God. I cannot, ſaid ſhee, bleſſe him, hee is bleſſed in himſelfe: and I never heard him blaſphemed, but I was grieved at it, I had rather haue heard the evill ſpirit named ten times, nor him once blaſphemed, fye on them that cannot bleſſe, and yet will blaſpheme him.

When I earneſtly prayed for her, She ſaid, Why take yee paines on ſuch a vile wretched crea-

creature. I would Beſſie, ſaid I, haue God glorifying himſelfe, in ſaving a loſt ſoule, and magnifying his mercie on you who is miſerable. *I*, ſaid ſhee, that is right good, God grant it, God grant it. O there is little faith in the earth! and loue is growne cold.

When *I* deſired her to pray and ſaid, Long ſince Beſſie yee would haue prayed, why inſiſt yee not. Shee anſwered, *I* had the will of prayer, but who hath the ſpirit of prayer, God knowes: well is the ſoule that is in Chriſt: but they that are founded on that old father Adam, fearefull is their eſtate.

When *I* was poſing her with ſome queſtions, about her inward eſtate. She ſaid, Why examine yee mee ſo ſore, yee vſe a ſharpe examination, and yet yee will not bee my judge. Beſſie, ſaid *I*, *I* would know your conſtitution, that *I* may the better know how to deale with you, *I* am about to inſtruct and comfort you, to vſe the meanes, and beg a bleſſing from God vpon them, and *I* haue ſeene when yee were better content that *I* conferred with you and pray-

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ed for you. Shee answered, *It is a token that I get small comfort by them, The Lord, said I, Bessie hath that to giue, hee hath not cõcredit the dispẽsatiõ of a dram weight of grace to man nor Angell, hee keepeth that in his owne hand, and dispenses when & to whom, and after what measure & maner he pleases. But I see the devill in your corruption, not content that the meanes be vsed.* She answered, I find the devill, the world, & the flesh fighting against me, *I* feele both satans assaults, and *I* lye vnder Gods wrath, also which is a fearefull cace, what recke of all sathans assaults, if *I* lay not vnder Gods wrath.

Min. *The greater battell Bessie the greater victorie: I see a great conflict in you, and you your selfe findes it as you confesse; yet happie are yee who are pursued by sathan, and not possest by him, and vnder peace with him. The LORD hath divided betwixt you and him and drawne you to that side whereon the seede of the woman is: I finde faith fighting in you against vnbeliefe, and where faith and vnbeliefe are in one soule fighting, faith shall ever prevaile,* By faith is our victorie?

1. Iohn

1. Iohn. 5, 4 *And what is the condition of the Christian ever after his calling, but to feele this troubleſome conflict, betweet nature and grace, ſpirit and fleſh, the old man and the new. But bleſſed bee GOD Who ſhall trade ſathan vnder our feete: ſo albeit this battell bee burndenſome, yet let this beare you vp, that the LORD in end ſhall giue you the victorie over all your enemies.* It were, ſaid ſhee, a great comfort to mee, if *I* were perſwaded of it: but *I* cannot bee quite of infidelitie and deſpaire: Well is the ſoule that ever it came in the world, that can bee freed of vnbeliefe, and gets grace to believe. LORD baniſh the devill and *I* ſhall believe.

And ſome gentle-men, and others being with mee, ſhee directs her ſpeach to them, ſaying, Yee Gentle-men and ſimple, and all, Let my caſting backe bee your forward comming: well are yee that can believe and pray, but I haue none: I haue no wit in the world, either to bleſſe God or benefite my ſelfe; many thouſands get grace and faith, and I would as faine haue it as any of them.

MIN.

MIN. Bessie *GOD measureth his owne by their vnfained desire, and what you would bee in an heartie affection, that you are in the accompt of God, and that secret seed of grace, which in this exercise vnder the ashes of your corruption lyeth hidde, & dead as it were like seed in the ground, or hotte coales vnder ashes, shall heereafter in the mercie of God budde and breake foorth, for it maye bee discerned alreadie in these divine desires in your estimation of the blessednesse of those that believe, & affection to bee on that number.*

MIN. Bessie, *is there any comfort come yet?* Shee answereth, if it were come it would kyth, it would bud foorth: Oft and many a time haue you said comfort was comming, but I cannot finde it: Alace, I am an outlaw to GOD, I weepe in the night when I should sleepe; I mourne when others are merrie; I am bound when they are free; I haue a long-some laire, a fearefull & sore laire heere: when others goe vp and downe, to and froe, I am a wonder to the world, and I am worthie to bee so.

Min. *Bessie, long delay is not an argu-*

ment of vtter denyall, & where yee mourne where others are merrie, it is better to goe to the house of mourning nor of feasting: Blessed are they that mourne, saith Christ, but Woe to them that laugh. We are heere in the vally of teares and kingdome of patience. The Lord will wype the teares from your eyes, hee is leading you by hell to heaven, and through many tribulations and afflictions to his kingdome, peace shall bee the end of your battels, and rest the end of trouble. Wee haue Bessie brought you a drinke of wine to comfort your spirit. Wine, said shee, the worst water in the Well is over good for mee, I will haue no wine, why should *I* haue the benefite when it is neither blessed to me, neither can *I* blesse him that giues it, *I* care not for outward bodily comforts, since *I* cannot get the inward and spirituall.

Min. *Will yee seeke it of GOD Bessie in the name of IESVS.* LORD if thou will said she, the LORD hath power enough but not finding faith in IESUS, shee said shee wanted a warrand to seeke in his Name. Min. *I will shew you a Warrand Bessie, his owne command with a promise*

50. *Psal.* 15. *In the day of thy trouble, &c.* 1. *Iohn.* 3. 23. *This is his commandement that wee believe, &c. Also hee calleth, Math.* 11. *on the Wearie and laden, promising to ease them: you cannot deny but you are both laden and wearie under the loade. Therfore you are called on, and the more miserable you are, you are the meeter object for mercy to Worke on: Will you fly from the Saviour, because you are lost, or from the Physitian, because you are sicke.* Alace, said shee, *I* cannot finde a warrand, *I* finde a wrong warrand. *What call you a wrong warrand, said I. I* cannot finde Christ, said shee, and any thing beside him is wrong.

Min. *But say, IESVS interceid for mee.*

I will not blaspheme him, said shee, nor bee a lyar, *I* am a lyar great enough already, for to mee to speake the words with my mouth without faith in my heart, what is that but to take his name in vaine.

Min. *Shall I pray for you Bessie.*

What good, said shee, can *I* get by your prayers, except *I* had a heart to pray for my selfe, *I* haue many things to seeke, if

I could get faith to belieue, and relieſe to my ſpirit, and what matter of ſawes then: when I ſee that I ſaw not, then ſhall I doe that I did not. Theſe three yeare I had not a faithfull deſire, indeed I thought it came all from your owne mouth, all the inlacke of my prayers.

Min, *Howſo Beſſie, what heard you mee ſay.* That prayers availed not, ſaid ſhee. Min. *I haue oft complained of our prayers, as I had juſt cauſe, and that God might bee angrie againſt them, Pſal* 81.9 *and might repell them if he delt injuſtice with vs, but this was not to make vs leaue off prayers, but to repent and pray more fervently.*

But the time hath beene when you delighted in prayer, ſaid I. Shee anſwered, *I* found comfort then in prayer. *I* had no comfort but in prayer, *I* had many calamities, and whom to ſhould *I* ſeeke but to God, and oft went *I* to him with a grieved heart: had one God, what reck of all the world, what recke who bee againſt them if hee bee with them: but if a ſoule bee vnder Gods ſeede, what availeth friends, kin, jewels, and all the

world,

world: Oh and alas for ever! that I ſhould want that bleſſing of his favour, which hee beſtowes on ſo many: Alace, I haue gotten the poore mans anſwere, you will not bee ſerved.

Min. *Take not that anſwere Beſſie: continue crying and knocking, for he hath ſaid,* ſeeke and you ſhall finde: *and that poore Woman of* Canaan, *that would not take a repulſe, or nay-ſay, was ſatisfied in end* But I am none of his, ſaid ſhee. Beſſie, *ſaid I, who told you that? the deuill would haue you thinke ſo: and will you take his teſtimonie againſt you, who is a lyar from the beginning, and not the Witneſſe of the veritie, and Word of GOD With you: beliene not Sathan nor your owne falſe heart, I know GOD in his owne time will giue you comfort.*

Beſſie. The knowledg is yours, ſaid ſhe, but the ſorrow is mine: well is the ſoule that getteth the holy Spirit, to ſeeke grace and mercy at his hands: well is the ſoule that getteth the benefite and the bleſſing with it: but fye on them that coumpts the fore afore the glorie, the fore of the earth before the glory of hea-

ven, it is no fore to them but a fearefull curſe: Alace, I haue long to liue, and a wretched life; I wearie vp, and I weary downe, ſighs helpe not, ſobs helpe not, groanes helpe not, and prayer is faint: it is a fearefull calamitie, to haue woe heere, and woe heereafter, to haue hell heere, and hell heereafter for ever: the matter is the leſſe, they that gets a light life, a lightſome life, that they get woe heereafter; and a lightſome life is the faith that many hath: but it is moſt wofull and dooleſull, to haue woe heere, and woe heereafter for ever. *I* will tell you my teſtament, i haue beene in hell theſe many yeares, and I looke never for another heaven. O wretch that I am! alace for ever, there a great flie cõming, a fearefull cup, and I will get my ſhare of it, and it is nothing I feele heere, to that that I feare for ever.

Min. Beſſie, *the LORD corrects you heere, that you periſh not with the world for ever: hee woundeth and hee will heale againe, albeit you can neither thinke it nor feele it, nor hope for it, yet in his Name I will aſſure you in his owne time hee will*

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eaſe you and ſpeake peace to you. I cannot, ſaid ſhee, find you a good ſpay-man Min. *Yet if ever Beſſie I ſpake trueth, you will finde it: I promiſe you in the Name of the LORD.* Shee anſwered, The Lords Leivetennant will bee loath to lye; well is his Lieveteunant. *Whom call you ſaid I, his Lieveteunant.* You, ſaid ſhee, and ſuch as you, yee are Tennants and not maſters. Min. *Beſſie, grippe to the promiſe of mercy,* hope aboue hope. I haue not, ſaid ſhee, that gift of my ſelfe, if God giue mee it not. *Seeke it of GOD,* ſaid *I,* What recke of words, ſaid ſhe, ſince I cannot get mends to my inward parts. *I am ſure, ſaid I, if you ſhould goe to hell Beſſie, you would goe to hell with loue to GOD.* Shee anſwered, What recke of my loue to him, ſince hee hath none to mee, if hee had loue to mee, all were well. Min. *But he loues you Beſſie, before you love him, for your loue is the effect of his, and they whom hee loveth can never periſh.* His owne, ſaid ſhee, ſhall never periſh. Min. *But you are one of thoſe Beſſie, and hath right to his promiſe.* Shee anſwered, How ſhall I

believe you who believeth not him who hath all power, and is trueth it selfe? I would faine seeke GOD, but I feele many stops and letts, and my prayers are dung backe. If any had had foure and twenty houres, yea, a touch of that, vnder which I haue lyne these three yeares, they would thinke their case fearefull, and would giue a world (if they had it) for a blinck of his reconciled face: But my calamitie wil make others runne and cry for mercy, my griefe and displeasure is your joy and gladnesse. Min. *How so Bessie, we take no pleasure in your grief.* Shee answered, The Christian that is sealed, seeing mee, will flie to mercy like a bird, but I want wings.

After I had prayed for her, She sayes, if God would giue mee a heart to giue you thankes for your good prayer, I would giue it: and if I had a motion in the right way of salvation, O as I should runne and flie to him like a bird. *GOD bee blessed, said I, I see some fore-running tokens of his comming with comfort.* She answered, they are but sober and small tokens. *Your words, said I, smels some-*

tymes

tymes of the Spirit of Grace and faith, and sometimes of the flesh, infidelitie, and infirmitie: for the prayers of the Saincts are oft like a fire, which at the first hath smoke & reake, without light or heat, but breaketh out ere all bee done in a cleare light, and comfortable heat, as may bee seene in sundrie of Davids Psalmes; where he beginneth with heavie plaints, and endeth in heavenly praises and prayers ere all be done.

At another time I speared if any comfort was yet come? Shee answered, Dolour was come, but no comfort, you are troubled with mee in Pulpet, and out of Pulpet, and in comming vnto me day after day: will you make you quite of this cumber. *Bessie said I, I thinke no cumber of it, it is the duety of my calling, & would God you got comfort by it: but how shall I free my selfe of it.* Shee answered, Cause cut mee off. *And wherefore said I, would you haue mee, or any taking your blood on vs, and sinne on our soules.* Nay, no sinne said shee, for there is just cause. *What cause, said I, What haue you done deserving death? Is not vnbeliefe, said shee,*

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the greateſt ſinne in the world, and I am guiltie of it. *We haue, ſaid I, no warrand for that: againe you are not voyde of faith, how ever in your wreſtling with vnbeliefe, you thinke ſo, and you would faine beleiue, and bee freed of vnbeliefe, that you might ſay with the Apoſtle*, it is not *you* but ſinne in *you: you are a ſufferer in this againſt your will: you are ſpiritually oppreſſed, and groanes to God vnder this bondage.* Then ſhee vttereth theſe words, O that I could get that fountaine of faith, a ſterne of it! O as grace wold grow! O for a bleſſed blinck of the favourable face of the Father of the faithfull! O to winne to that holy fountaine! I know hee is readie to giue, if I were readie to receaue and ſeeke: glorie pertaineth to him, and glorified ſhall he be. Min. *I pray you Beſſie ſeeke on, and glorifie him by incalling on his Name: pray him in IESVS Name to bee mercifull to you, and helpe your vnbeliefe.* I can, ſaid ſhee, name IESVS, but hee will not be pleaſed with words, except I had a warrand of faith in my heart to ſeeke by. Min. *Yet will you ſay the words, I thinke*

there

there is none but you, but they wil doe this much for mee. Many ſpeakes them, ſaid ſhee, with little faith, but I dare not, that I draw not downe his puniſhments Min. *Beſſie, bee will never bee angrie that you pray him to glorifie himſelfe, in giving you an heart to believe in him.* I haue great letts, ſaid ſhee. Min. *But pray him to take them away.* Thinke you, ſaid ſhe, that be to doe while now. Min. *But continue and let mee heare you and bee a witneſſe to it, doe this for my pleaſure.* It were my owne pleaſure and good, ſaid ſhee, if I could doe it rightly, it were my owne well: but God hath a worke to worke with mee, that you never ſaw the like of it.

Min. *Beſſie, pray God in Ieſus that it may bee a worke of mercy to his glorie and your ſalvation.* Shee anſwered, I will tell you my minde, IESVS is a juſt one without exception, not like the falſe fleſh of this generation, hee will loſſe none of his owne, and though they fall fearefully he will raiſe them againe, but thoſe that he bids not of, he giues them no grace to ſeeke to him, whereof I am one: I can

name

name him and ſpeake any words as you heere, my mouth ſhould bee opned to ſeeke, if my heart were opned to beliene, but it is cloſed, I may mourne for it, but I cannot mend it, but LORD mend it, LORD mend it. *Eeke ſaid I, for Chriſts ſake.* I want faith, ſaid ſhee, I know the ſinne of man is not ſo great, but GODS mercie is greater to for-giue it, where they can repent and beliene. But I haue not this grace of my ſelfe, and God gives mee it not: Pray that ye may be preſerved from the perill and plague that is come on mee. Well is them that are grounded on Chriſt. Well is them that are brethren and ſiſters to him. O that I were one of them! O that thoſe that are come out of my loynes would ſeeke to him, and bleſſe him! O that the Grace-giver would give mee grace to believe and give him glory, and I ſhould bleſſe him, and give him thankes and praiſe and honour and glory for ever! O that I could get an heart to give him thankes for any thing hee ſends. why ſhould not I be content with his will? O that I could welcome his ſend, howe

bitter

bitter soever, and reverence the sender! What recks of mee; if hee get his owne glory? but alace I have many wants, many woes, many wannes, wangrace, wanchance, no wealles: I am sorely shaken, a sore shake of wrath is come on my soule.

MIN. *Hee shakes you* Bessie *to make you sure.* If it were so said shee, I wold seeke to him; The tentation (said I) dings you from that that you desire, and you are greatly wounded in your spirituall battell: But what recks of a wound to him that getteth the victorie, you will in the Lordes mercie get the victorie, what reck of your wounds then: And we will sitt downe on our knees and crave it to you of God in the name of Iesus. After I had prayed shee sayeth, God for thy beloved sonne Iesus sake, see to my mister and succour mee Now yee are witnes of that, that yee would have had, that I seeke in Iesus name. Blessed be God for it said I, Seeke on, and I will pledge my soule for yours, that you shall bee safe. Seeke must I said shee, and seeke shall I, though hee should ding mee back to the bot-

bottome of the sea, & charge the whole family that they doe the like, as you doe mee, for come well, come woe, they will get a share of it: I will (said I) for they have to concurre with you.

The next time that I visited her, and demanded how shee did, shee answered, The life of the body is not like to goe out, and comfort is not like to come in to the soule: Yet waite Bessie in hope & give not over, it will come. I know said shee your tales and tydings, but cannot find them true: alace that ever I came in the world, I am not booked, I am not baptized, I am not written in the booke of Life, I am not baptized with the right baptisme, I cannot finde the fruite of it. Bessie said I, I am sorrie that I finde you not as I left you: continued you not calling on God in Christs name, as you promised? Shee answered, I was the worse of the words that you caused me to say, I am ever since a thousand fold more troubled than before. Bessie the words have not the wyte: it's Satan that rageth before he be cast out, and your trouble the neerer the height, the neerer is the deli-

verie,

verie, and althogh your Physick be bitter, yet it will have good effects. No trouble is joyous or pleasant for the present &c. Heb. 12. The Lord who will not let the hand of the wicked lye long on the backe of the righteous. Psal. 125. 3. will not let his owne hand which is heavier than the hand of the wicked lye long, he will send the issue with the tentation. 1. Cor. 10. 13. Wherfore hearken not Bessie to Satans suggestions that your heart bee not bound vp that you pray not: That is (said shee) a true tale, Satan binds vp my heart. But pray said *I* against it: say the Lords prayer. *I* can said shee saye the wordes, but *I* haue no warrant to pray it. *I* cannot call him Father, hee is the Father of the faithfull alone, but that priviledge of children is not given mee. *I* cannot finde a warrant that *I* am his, alace that ever *I* was the cursed ground whereon the ill seed was sowne.

Min. *Bessie, the more miserable you find your selfe, the more meet are you to goe to the Saviour for mercie.*

Bes. I am not said shee worthie that

bee

hee ſhould give me any grace or mercie.
Min. *Beſſie, none is worthie, and if hee gave to the worthie, his glory and praiſe would bee the leſſe, but in this is his mercy magnified, that he manifeſteth it on the miſerable; and this a fault in vs, that wee are ever ſeeking ſomething in our ſelves, which would derogate from the praiſe of his grace, as preſumption and deſperation are dangerous rocks that manie runne on: and this is a third and as dangerous as any of them, and the rather, that it is not ſoone ſeene or tane vp, Wee are aye ſeeking ſomething in our ſelves that ſhould commend vs to God, as if We could not bee ſaved except wee were perfite, as if our owne innocencie, and not Gods mercie in Chriſts merite were the warrant of our ſalvation.*
Beſ. I cannot ſaid ſhee ſpeake the word can pleaſe you, No, not them that came out of my bowells, howe then can it pleaſe the Lord? Mine owne minde and Satan lets mee not believe, and my vnbeliefe draweth downe all the ill of the word, and you booke mee, and carries my name in many airts: but I cannot mend it.

Min.

Min. *Beſſie, nothing to your prejudice ca-rie I your name, for whye ſhould not the Saints know of your eſtate?*

Beſ. I pray you tell mee ſaid ſhee, how the people thinke of mee, whether are they blyth or woe?

Min. *I Will aſſure you Beſſie, Gods people mournes With you, and beares a part of your burthen, as for my ſelfe I haue five children ſick of the fever, God Who knowes my heart, is my witnes, that I Would not ſo faine haue them raiſed vp in their bodies, as you comforted in ſpirit.*

Beſ. You know your reward, ſaid ſhee.

Min. *I looke not to that, I ſeeke mereie.*

Beſ. But ſaid ſhe, if I had ſpirituall grace and could, I would give you a reward. Will ever that day dawne that GOD will draw mee a wandring ſheepe home to himſelfe?

Min. *Beſſie, in Gods mercie I am aſſured of it.*

Beſ. The God ſaid ſhee who made hea-ven & earth, who hath all power grant it in mercy; weale is them for ever fi.ds his favour, but woe is them that feeles his fead: had I hope it wold mitigat my

sorrow.

Min. *Bessie said I, the Lord who by a secret grace underproppes & sustaines you, now will in his owne time, by a sensible grace, and by his felt presence aboundantly comfort your soule in such sort, that the weight and grievousnesse of the tentation and trouble and delay of time, shall bee recompensed with vnspeakable joy, that you your self shall confesse, the one light in regard of the other, not to bee worthie of it: as by the contrare, hee recompenseth the delaye of judgment towards the Wicked, With the heavier weight of Wrath.*

Bes. Happie (said shee) are they who suffer for Christs sake, for righteousnesse sake, they will bee comforted now and then: but they that suffer for sinne, without sense of his favour, comfortlesse is their condition. Will one goe through the earth, vp and down, to & fro, where will they find a wearied wight till they come to mee. And you that heare mee, with the pith of prayer that *I* can, I aske of God that yee never know the waye that *I* am in: *It* is lacke of faith that is my losse, want of faith is my wracke, I

lye

ly vnder fearefull weights, and wanteth faith to get the remission of them. I am fallen wiihout a resurrection: My Iudge is my partie: I have no claime to his mercie: I have no ground of faith to fasten grips on him: I find not a sparke of light, and I find no fruit of your prayers, albeit I heare them: No Christian should come neere mee.

Min. *Bessie, The LORD will oft for good causes desert his deareſt Saincts, and withdraw himselfe from their sight and sense, for their humiliation and instruction, (that they count not grace naturall) for their greater cõsolation When he cõmeth againe: & for your provocation to follow after him when he withdrawes his grace, and yet it is not a reall, but a supposed desertion: Wherefore seeke his sensible presence, and breake thorow all impediments of terrour, blindnesse. and vnbeliefe, or what else, thrimble thorow all, and hee shall come leaping over the mountaines of your sinnes and hilles of wrath, with the voyce of heavenly consolation.*

Bes. Shall I seeke hote water vnder cold yce: I haue not come in the preciſe

ciſe and bleſſed houre of grace: I am come behinde, and where you will mee to pray, wherefore ſerues the prayer that glorifieth not God.

Min. *Beſſie, It is yet the acceptable time, and hee Who is found of them that ſeeke him not, will much more reveale himſelfe to them who ſeeketh. And as for prayer, by it you greatly glorifie God: for you acknowledge therein your miſerie, and neceſſitie, and that hee is GOD who not onely knowes your miſerie, and neceſſitie, but is both willing and able to helpe the ſame, and wee haue not only his command to pray, but alſo his promiſe to bee heard.*

Beſ. Then all breake his command, and chiefly I, and ſo will be ſeene on the whole ſwacke,

After this, when I had read ſome comfortable places to her, and prayed for her, ſhee cryed out and doubled it oft: O bleſſed are they that have that ſpirit of prayer! O bleſſed are they!

NOW

NOW as for the end of this conflict, and death of this deare daughter of *Abraham*, in Apryle 1625. I beeing in *Glasgow* at the provinciall assemblie, the LORD called her home, shee being greatly extenuate and worne, what by heavie sickneſſe on her bodie, what by this longsome and feareſull exercise in her soule: death on a suddaintie delt with her heart, that her words and speach failed her: but in presence of diverse witneſſe, her hands and eyes were heaved to the heavens, and so giving that signe of victorie, shee randered her spirit: and although it pleased not our gratious GOD (who in his great wisedome worketh after diverse sortes with his owne) to let vs heare out of her owne mouth of the glorious victorie, and vnspeakeable joyes that he had given her inwardly in her soule, yet I am sure there is none that is illuminate from aboue, & taught to discerne spiritually, that will any way dout of her blessed deliverāce, albeit no outward signe had bene seene: yea, it was a wonderfull mercie, that

God

God ſo long vnder ſuch horrours, held her owne hand out of her ſelfe. Which at laſt with her eyes ſhee liſted vp to the Heavens, when her ſpeach could not expreſſe her inward feeling of an vnſpeakable joy, and victorious faith.

Onely heerein wee haue our warning to bee wiſe in time, and to get oyle into our Lampes, and not to pleaſe our ſelues with toome Lampes, and with a bare ſhow of an outward profeſſion, but labour to haue a liuely and effectuall faith, in the deepe of our ſoules for a conceit or opinion will ſeeme ſufficient till wee bee put at, which will not doe our turne, nor ſtand vs in ſtead in the firie tryall.

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